OPINION

BY HUMA YUSUF

COP-out

ANOTHER COP, another blow to the planet. The annual UN conference increasingly seems a ritual designed to accept planetary demise rather than an opportunity to course-correct. For Pakistan, this year's COP has highlighted the challenges of juggling realpolitik with managing the increasingly terrifying impacts of the climate crisis. In this context, our state's long-honed capacity for cognitive dissonance serves it well.

Pakistan at COP speaks on behalf of the Vulnerable 20 (V20) group of countries disproportionately affected by climate change; usually aligns with the Like-Minded Developing Countries that call for differentiated responsibilities for states in terms of taking responsibility for and tackling climate change, and is formally part of the G77 and China group, which calls for climate justice, but increasingly in the context of economic opportunity and technology transfer. Navigating these overlapping allegiances just about works. But from a foreign policy perspective, Pakistan's challenges at COP stem from the fact that its critical patron states have divergent positions on the climate crisis.

In the US, President Donald Trump has declared climate change to be the "greatest con job ever" and withdrawn America from the Paris Climate Agreement. Instead, he is betting on AI and cryptocurrencies, which require water-depleting and earth-warming energy supplies at volumes that do not square with climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Saudi Arabia, with whom Pakistan has managed a defence-focused reset, is leading the charge to defang COP agreements, pushing this past fortnight to ensure that the commitment to phase out fossil fuels is not even mentioned. For China, on the other hand, its progressive stance on climate change, particularly in comparison with the US, has become a calling card. Beijing sees its (relative) environmental evangelism as a pitch for global leadership and an opportunity to claim the moral high ground vis- -vis hypocritical Western countries. Most importantly, climate mitigation is a major economic opportunity as Chinese EVs, batteries, solar panels and wind turbines enjoy a near monopoly in global supply chains for the renewable and e-mobility sectors. China showed up in force at this year's COP, pushing for open green trade as the way forward.

Moving between Washington, Riyadh and Beijing, and oscillating between offering up environmentally unfriendly mines, cryptomining capacity and defence production facilities, and dealing with climate-induced national disasters, what is Islamabad to do when it comes to COP?

No matter the advantages of reviving close ties with Washington and Riyadh, Pakistan cannot deny that it is a victim of the climate crisis. The Climate Risk Index 2026 retains it on the list of the 20 most affected countries in terms of the economic and human toll of the climate crisis (taking a 30-year view from 1995-2024).

In another demonstration of our growing foreign policy prowess (or is it cynicism?), we have found a balance. At COP30, we have focused on demands for more adaptation finance (read: damage the planet if you must, but help us pay for the collateral damage). This aligns with a key theme of this year's COP, which was an ask by developing nations and emerging economies to triple adaptation finance commitments from $40 billion to $120bn. This still falls short of the global need of between $210bn and $360bn annually, which is immense and growing. But it represents a sizeable shift from the COP29 ask of $300bn in climate finance commitments overall (including adaptation, resilience and mitigation) by developed nations by 2035.

> What is Islamabad to do when it comes to COP?

No doubt Pakistan needs adaptation finance to help its communities and ecosystems adapt to the harsh realities of a world that will warm by two degrees above pre-industrial temperatures. This financing supports everything from climate disaster-resilient infrastructure to the health systems needed to respond to the epidemics that will be unleashed by climate shifts. But while demanding adaptation finance, Pakistan should heed the warnings of activists who point out that the conditionalities attached to such financing test the bounds of national sovereignty (for example, by enabling external actors to guide a nation's planning for food security).

There is also concern that as climate justice is repositioned as an economic opportunity for some, climate-vulnerable countries will find themselves reframed as key markets for green products, at risk of being trapped in further debt cycles linked to green transition. The intersection of politicking and climate change responsiveness presents as many perils as opportunities; let's hope Pakistan can find a way to deftly navigate these. ■

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BY NEDA MULJI

Empowered teachers

IN the developing world, teachers have a role that extends well beyond that of educators. The change that teachers bring about not only impacts their students' academic attainment, it also has ripple effects on their students' families in many ways. Education is a critical tool of social development and, as evidence shows, learning outcomes are strongly correlated to teacher quality. Our cultural and religious legacy also recognises the indelible impact of a teacher and describes teaching as a 'noble' profession and almost elevates the teacher to the status of a parent.

Yet, our teachers remain constrained. Trapped in systems reeking of mistrust, lack of professional support and ad hoc policies, teachers often find their individual passion and dedication unsustainable. No matter how goal-focused or resilient they may be, a counterproductive environment erodes their motivation.

The role and vision of school leaders is paramount in creating a community of learning where teachers collaborate across school levels, where change is organically sustained, where focus on positive growth is the norm and teachers share the vision. Resistance damages the progress of educational institutions.

Resistance can never be quelled; it finds its way into deflected anger, targeting students in classrooms, or it manifests itself in conflicts with parents and colleagues. These outcomes are not only detrimental to learners' development and well-being, but also damaging for the students' educational achievement and the reputation of schools. The solution may lie in empowering teachers strategically, so that they feel trusted, supported and inspired. Much of that has to do with hiring the right people and handing over responsibilities rather than hovering with criticism. Great schools aren't built by policies and programmes — they're built by great teachers who can support students and ignite their potential. Teachers flourish when they can innovate, experiment and take accountability for their actions. And when teachers flourish, students thrive.

In schools where systems are in place to embed teachers' voice and vision, where their input is not merely sought by way of feedback and surveys and where they are included in decision-making, the level of energy, focus and momentum changes to a 'can do' attitude in teaching and learning practices.

An area of sustainable support is professional development. In many schools, professional development sessions are conducted as a 'check box' exercise. However, there are also schools where teachers are involved in planning sessions, bringing challenges to the surface and exchanging research that leads to action. In these schools, teachers know that their contribution matters.

Teacher empowerment isn't a one-time act, and it isn't a coin flip that can bring about changes instantly. The effort comes from the vision at the top and it requires sustained action through conversations where leaders listen and lift colleagues, where grievances are addressed and where the mindset is that of striving together for greater institutional success.

Teachers feel empowered when they are involved in school improvement planning, when they are part of growth decisions and are given strategic aims that they know will impact growth. Even where linear career progression is not always an option, pathways can be created to add roles and responsibilities that capitalise on the skills of individual teachers. For example, a teacher who is willing to invest time and effort in training as a well-being officer can be tasked with developing and implementing a well-being plan for colleagues. Those who have experience in leading transformation can be tasked with helping junior colleagues in adapting to technology or new processes. Those who are great at mediation skills can be given 'ombuds' roles to address conflicts among staff.

> Great schools are built by great teachers.

Schools today operate within a complex environment shaped by heightened parental expectations, technological demands and societal pressures affecting social and emotional well-being. While they navigate these complexities, the task of school leaders has escalated into a demanding role that requires rapid and continuous adaptation, razor-sharp monitoring and seamless communication.

The teachers' role is no longer restricted to delivering the curriculum and producing results. It has extended to a collaborative partnership in building systems of education through reimagining possibilities, while continuously pushing the boundaries of achievement and capability. The learners — the ultimate beneficiaries — inevitably gain from the enhanced role and upgraded skills of their teachers. ■

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FROM THE PAST PAGES OF DAWN

1975 | Fifty years ago

Gen Franco buried

MADRID: The late General Francisco Franco, former President of Spain, was buried here today [Nov 23] at a Civil War monument north of Madrid. Earlier this morning, King Juan Carlos was cheered by thousands of Spaniards, when he arrived at the Royal Palace for a requiem mass for Gen Franco. Cries of long live the King rose from the huge crowd as the monarch and Queen Sofia mounted the mourners' stand outside the Oriente Palace where the body of the 82-year-old General has lain in state… .

The royal couple was met by the General's widow, Carmen, who was sobbing under her black veil. The crowd had gathered before dawn for the mass which preceded the State funeral… . The mass was said by Cardinal Marcelo Gonzalez Martin, Roman Catholic Primate of Spain.

The crowds were joined by representatives of foreign countries, who took their places in mourners' seats outside the palace. They included US Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller, King Hussein of Jordan and President Augusto Pinochet of Chile. After the mass, the General was taken for burial at a grandiose monument to the dead of the 1936-1939 civil war in the mountains north-east of Madrid. — News agencies

1950 | Seventy-five years ago

Train accident

NEW YORK: Seventy-eight people were killed in one of the worst smashes in American history when a train crowded with holiday-makers rammed another in the Queens district of New York last night [Nov 23]. This was announced by the police after the last body had been removed from the Wreckage today. The injured totalled 182. Each of the two trains was carrying about 1,000 passengers on their way home for the annual American Thanksgiving Holiday today.

The leading train had stopped to let off two women passengers who had got on by mistake. The second train crashed into it, telescoping the rear coach. An hour and a half after the crash, high on a viaduct running through the Queens district, emergency squads working with searchlights were still trying to get at trapped passengers. Fifty doctors were called to tend the injured, says Reuter.

UPA adds: Police officials announced 76 bodies were recovered from wreck, although a railroad spokesman set the death toll at 78. It is estimated 300 persons were injured. … There were 76 ... bodies at Queens County morgue along with parts of bodies. … 59 persons remained in hospitals… . — News agencies

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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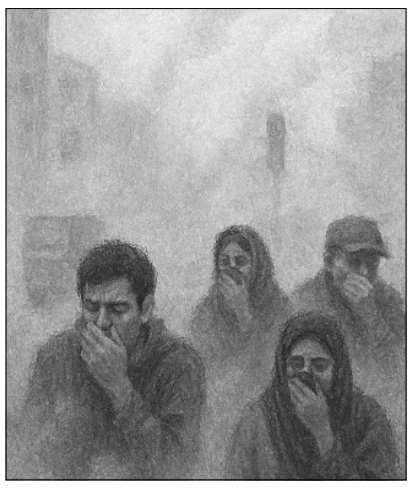
Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All letters should carry the writer's address, CNIC and phone numbers.



Lahore gasping for breath once again

AS I stood on the roof of my house in Lahore recently, I could see nothing but a thick, grey curtain of smog hanging over the city. The Air Quality Index (AQI) had climbed beyond 250 — a level the world classifies as 'very unhealthy'. In that suffocating haze, one phrase echoed in my mind: "I cannot breathe". These words that were once linked to George Floyd's tragic death in the United States, now capture the daily reality of millions of Pakistanis who inhale poison every day with every breath. Even if their protest remains silent, there is no doubt that they continue to feel suffocated under the toxic sky.

The right to clean air that is implicitly guaranteed under Articles 9 and 9A of the Constitution of Pakistan as part of the right to life and dignity has become nothing but a hollow promise.

Having said that, while the government must enforce environmental laws and regulate industries, the persisting crisis also reflects the nation's collective negligence. People burn garbage openly, use outdated vehicles, and stay indifferent to the pollution they themselves produce in their homes and on the streets.

Clean air cannot be delivered solely through policy; it requires shared responsibility. Citizens, communities and educational institutions must step forward — plant trees, discourage crop burning, reduce fuel emissions, and create awareness. Environmental preservation should become a civic duty, not just a slogan.

The fight for clean air is not merely environmental. it is also constitutional and moral. The smog that surrounds us is more than pollution — it is a symbol of our apathy. Unless both the state and society treat clean air as a matter of life and death, we will continue to gasp — unseen, unheard and unprotected.

Noorain Waheed
Lahore

Anti-smog guns

PAKISTAN has often been cited as being a small contributor to global warming. A reasonable estimate puts this contribution at just one per cent. However, the alarming part is the impact global warming has had on human health in Pakistan. Based on the statistics of the Global Climate Risk Index, Pakistan happens to be the fifth most vulnerable country with respect to climate change. The city of Lahore often gets ranked among the most polluted cities on the globe by monitoring platforms, like IQAir.

Amidst all the distressing news that make the rounds every few days, there have been reports of the government resorting to the use of anti-smog guns to curtail air pollution in Lahore. The cultural capital is prone to smog and the government claims to be using anti-smog guns to minimise the risks associated with hazardous air pollution. Trucks with mounted devices are used to spray fine mists of water. The practice is said to help settle dust and airborne particles.

Lahore, often dubbed as the City of Gardens, has undergone rapid urbanisation, which, accompanied by a population boom, has led to the shrinking of green spaces. The result is that the main feature of winters in Punjab is now a toxic grey sky.

Samir Ayub
Karachi

No lessons learnt

CITIES across the province of Punjab are once again affected by oppressive haze. Lahore, Faisalabad and Gujranwala have seen extremely high Air Quality Index (AQI) levels, making them some of the most polluted cities globally. Despite ongoing warnings from environmental experts, the government's actions remain restricted to temporary closures of schools and offices. These measures do little to address the root issue.

The origins of smog are well understood: agricultural burning, uncontrolled industrial emissions, aging automobiles, and a lack of urban vegetation. However, what is missing is consistent enforcement of environmental regulations and long-term planning. Pakistan urgently needs stricter emission control, better public transport, and incentives for using clean energy. Additionally, awareness campaigns must educate citizens about how individual practices, such as waste burning and due vehicle maintenance, contribute to the crisis.

Punjab chokes again, but we have not learnt any lesson through all these years. Smog is a public health emergency that affects millions of people. It is not merely a seasonal annoyance. Instead of treating it as an annual occurrence, the provincial authorities should approach it as a national priority. We cannot expect to breathe clean air ever again till we take the required actions consistently on a long-term basis.

Khadeejah Farooq
Karachi

Containing rabies

ACCORDING to the World Health Organisation (WHO), rabies is still endemic in Asia, and Pakistan continues to report worrying levels. In Sindh alone, more than 300,000 dog-bite instances were reported in 2024, with at least 15 fatalities, while Karachi had over 50,000.

In the first two months of the current year, Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK) registered 5,795 instances compared to 3,169 in the corresponding period of 2024. By mid-2024, more than 26,000 dog-bite cases were registered in Karachi, with many deaths. Experts believe that the real numbers are likely to be higher as many cases go unreported.

Pakistan imports approximately two million doses of rabies vaccine per year, although supply remains inadequate in many hospitals. This year, the Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) in Karachi successfully released the country's first locally made rabies vaccine, the DOW RAB, with over 30,000 doses delivered, and manufacturing set to gather further pace soon. However, significant obstacles remain: the uncontrolled growth of stray dogs, limited vaccine supply, low public awareness, and the lack of an effective countrywide immunisation programme.

Rabies is totally preventable, but it requires a collaborative approach and effort. Governments must ensure vaccine availability in all medical facilities, proper record-keeping of dog-bite incidents, and effective national vaccination and awareness programmes. Children should be taught to act safely around animals, and families must understand the significance of immediately cleansing wounds and seeking medical assistance after a bite. Health experts should advise communities on vaccine access and treatment alternatives.

If we all act together, Pakistan can still control this lethal but preventable condition.

Dr Pavan Arjan Meghwar
Islamkot

DHA woes

THE Defence Housing Authority (DHA) area in Karachi is in a sad state of neglect and despair. Broken and potholed roads, choked sewerage lines, and a growing population of stray dogs are now the actual face of DHA. Instead of working on these crucial issues, the DHA seems more interested in keeping all its focus on Phase VIII while neglecting all the remaining phases completely.

Khayaban-i-Ittehad is one such story of neglect. Khayaban-i-Seher, Khayaban-i-Rahat, Khayaban-i-Muhafiz, 26th Street and many other roads are in a bad shape. The patchwork by the Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC) is extremely substandard. The roads that were built after the completion of the much-hyped stormwater drains, were of extremely poor quality. As for stray dogs, they have forced people to stop going out for their morning and evening walks. What the DHA badly needs is a team of qualified town planners and engineers.

Arsalan Faruqi
Karachi

Internet suspension

THE government has suspended 3G/4G internet services across Balochistan due to security concerns. Unfortunately, this is not the first time such a measure has been taken. People throughout the province have faced such disruption multiple times this year.

Undoubtedly, this frequent suspension of internet services amounts to a violation of human rights. The freedom of speech, which is considered a fundamental right, is repeatedly restricted, depriving the masses of essential access to communication and information.

Moreover, suspending internet services in the name of security reflects the inefficiency of law-enforcement agencies that are apparently unable to ensure safety without resorting to such extreme measures. The fact is that such decisions only create fear within society, and make the business community suffer significant losses. Additionally, relying on internet shutdowns is the easiest — and least effective — method for any government to claim it is maintaining security.

It would be far better if the government ensured safety without compromising the fundamental rights of the people. The government must reconsider the decision, and avoid taking any such action in the future to truly serve and protect people.

Prof Faheem Akhtar Gajani
Sohbatpur

▶ **CHILD MARRIAGE:** Despite legal restrictions, early marriages remain a reality in many rural areas. Young girls, often married before the age of 16, are thrust into adulthood without emotional, physical or psychological readiness. The consequences are severe: early pregnancies leading to maternal and infant mortality, domestic abuse and lifelong trauma. Behind every child bride is a story of lost dreams and a silenced voice. It is time we collectively challenged these harmful traditions through strict law-enforcement, awareness campaigns, and accessible education for girls. Religious leaders, teachers and community elders must play their part in eradicating this practice.
Nafisa Younus
Karachi

▶ **BORDER BATTLES:** The Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan has turned into a line of division rather than connection. Both sides must realise that military posturing only deepens insecurity. Stability demands communication, coordination and compassion. Pakistan's border management should be firm but humane, especially regarding Afghan refugees. Similarly, Afghanistan must demonstrate responsibility by preventing militant groups from using its soil against Pakistan. Economic and trade engagement can also soften hostility by linking mutual interests to shared prosperity.
Sadam Hussain
Larkana

▶ **UNDERAGE DRIVING:** Every day, young boys can be seen speeding through busy streets, often without helmets or any regard for traffic rules. According to Karachi traffic police, over 10,000 cases of underage driving were recorded in 2024, many involving schoolgoing children. Such reckless behaviour has caused several fatal accidents. Traffic police should carry out daily checks near schools, tuition centres and markets, and parents must be held accountable for allowing minors to drive. Moreover, awareness campaigns in schools and local communities can help prevent this dangerous trend. Underage driving is not a sign of maturity; it is a risk to life.
Amna Zafar
Karachi

External Ombudsman

Veteran journalist Muhammad Ali Siddiqi is *Dawn's* External Ombudsman (DEO). His duty is to attend to our readers' complaints, and to respond to them professionally. DEO is the investigating authority to whom all complaints can be referred, and it is DEO who takes notice of any alleged violations of *Dawn's* code of ethics, and informs the Editor for appropriate action.
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